

2007 State of Education Report  
Maryland State Department of Education

Better  
**Lives** Built  
on a **Strong**  
Foundation





## Effective **Education** **Drives** Maryland

### **Dear Friends of Maryland Public Education:**

**L**et me share with you some great news: for the third consecutive year, every Maryland school system has shown improvement on state assessments. That means that no matter where you live and where your children or grandchildren are going to school, they are probably better off this year than they were last year.

That has been our ongoing commitment. Improving education for all students in this state takes more than a one-time, short-term fix.

Building better schools requires ongoing support from all corners of Maryland. Students, teachers, and administrators must strive for excellence in the classroom. Parents must work with their children every day, and back the educators every step of the way. Community and governmental leaders must be unwavering in their advocacy for strong, effective schools.

*Education Week*, the nation's preeminent education newspaper, recently found that Maryland students had one of the nation's best chances for success, thanks in large part to the state's public education system. That honor—and lots of others—lets us know we are on the right track. But it doesn't indicate that our job is complete.

Quality education—preschool through high school—drives our quality of life. Strengthening our schools, increasing the rigor in our classrooms, and producing more graduates pave the way for continued economic growth and a better future.

This brief publication summarizes some of the many good things taking place in Maryland's 1,400 public schools. We have high expectations for our students and our schools, but thanks to your support we are confident of success. Work with us as we strive to strengthen each and every Maryland school. We happen to think there is no job that is more important.

Sincerely,

Nancy S. Grasmick,  
State Superintendent of Schools

# Our **Changing** Classrooms

## Enrollment

**M**aryland serves one of the nation's most diverse public school student populations, and the population is changing all the time. Minority children have made up the majority of students for the past few years. According to 2006 enrollment data, White students make up 48.6 percent of the state's enrollment, followed by African American students (38.1 percent), Hispanic (7.5 percent); Asian/Pacific Islander (5.2 percent); and American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.4 percent).

Enrollment for both Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander students has been rising steadily, while both White and African American student enrollment is on the decline. Hispanic student enrollment has more than doubled since 1998, growing from 30,924 to 65,613. The Asian and Pacific Island student population also has grown over the same period, from 33,007 to 44,956.

## Graduation and Beyond

**M**aryland's graduation rate broke 85 percent for the first time last year. The percentage of 12th graders who graduated has risen from 79 percent in 1996 to 85.43 percent in 2006. Among sub-groups, African American graduation improved from 78.21 percent to 78.89 percent, while the White and Asian American student graduation rates also improved. The Hispanic student graduation rate fell by a point, from 82.34 percent to 81.34 percent.

College remains the top choice for Maryland high school graduates. Approximately 62 percent of students plan to attend college or a specialized training school full-time, while another 22 percent plan to work and attend school. A growing number of students plan to enter the employment world based on training they received in high school, up from 2.7 percent in 2005 to 4.1 percent in 2006.

## Graduation Rate

	2002	2006
American Indian/Alaskan Native	80.61%	82.79%
Asian/Pacific Islander	93.77%	94.86%
African American	77.40%	78.89%
White (not of Hispanic origin)	87.12%	89.38%
Hispanic	83.36%	81.34%
<b>Overall</b>	<b>83.83%</b>	<b>85.43%</b>

Maryland does a better job of graduating Hispanic and Asian students than any other state in the nation.

— Information from "Diplomas Count," a special report in *Education Week*, June 20, 2006





## Rising to Meet Tough Standards

The results have been gratifying. For the third consecutive year, reading and mathematics scores on the MSA improved in all 24 school systems at both the elementary and middle school level. Assessment scores also showed steady improvement in the performance of students across all racial categories, at all grade levels, and for most students receiving special services. NCLB tracks achievement in reading, mathematics, student attendance, and graduation. States, school systems, and schools are judged on overall scores, as well as scores for racial subgroups and for students receiving special services (special education, free and reduced-price meals, and English language learners). Maryland measures improvements in achievement through the MSA. Schools are expected to make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), or they could fall under federally mandated sanctions.

While schools in some states have flinched in the face of the federal mandates, Maryland schools and school systems have worked diligently to meet the targets. Those efforts have paid off. Nearly 80 percent of Maryland schools made ambitious AYP targets in 2006. For 31 schools that had a history of academic struggles, last year's MSA brought even better news. Strong results from 2005 and 2006 allowed those schools to exit School Improvement, a program for schools that have been unable to meet standards for two or more consecutive years.

"I have been pleased and impressed with the work of all educators, under the leadership of Superintendent Nancy Grasmick, toward raising the educational achievement of our students."

— **Congressman Steny Hoyer**, recently named House Majority Leader, in his *Washington Report* column, January 8, 2006.

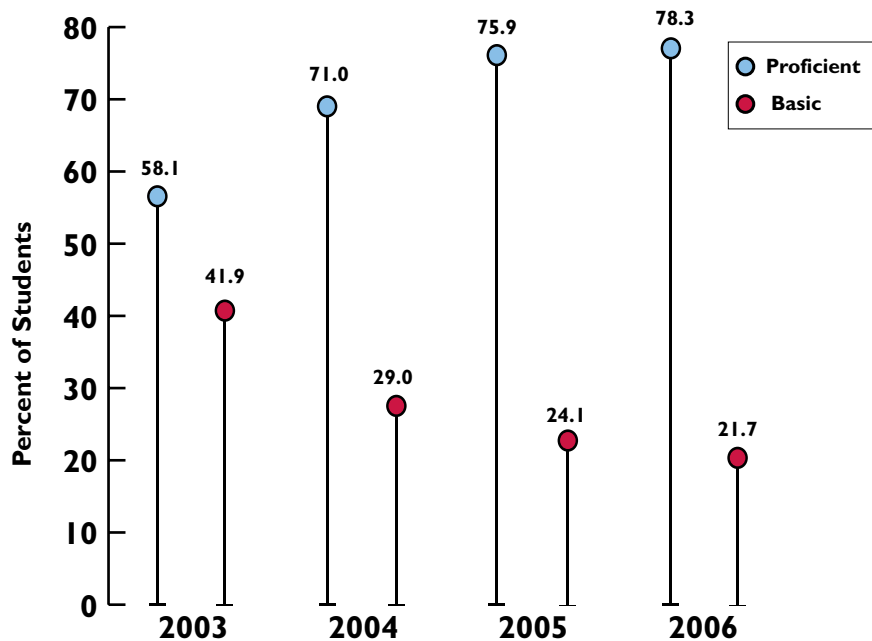
**M**aryland has set high expectations for its students and they have responded. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2002 set into place standards for all of the nation's schools, but by that point Maryland had already been working with a nationally recognized system of standards and accountability. *Education Week*, the nation's leading newspaper covering K-12 education, continued to rank Maryland's accountability system among the nation's very best, even after the state migrated to the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) program to comply with NCLB. Federal officials have been equally laudatory. In fact, Maryland is one of just 10 states to receive full approval from the U.S. Department of Education for its system of student assessments.

"All 50 states can exclude the test scores of some minority pupils when their schools are measured under the No Child Left Behind Law, but Maryland has the nation's strictest standards for the size of a subgroup of students that can be ignored."

— The Associated Press, April 16, 2006

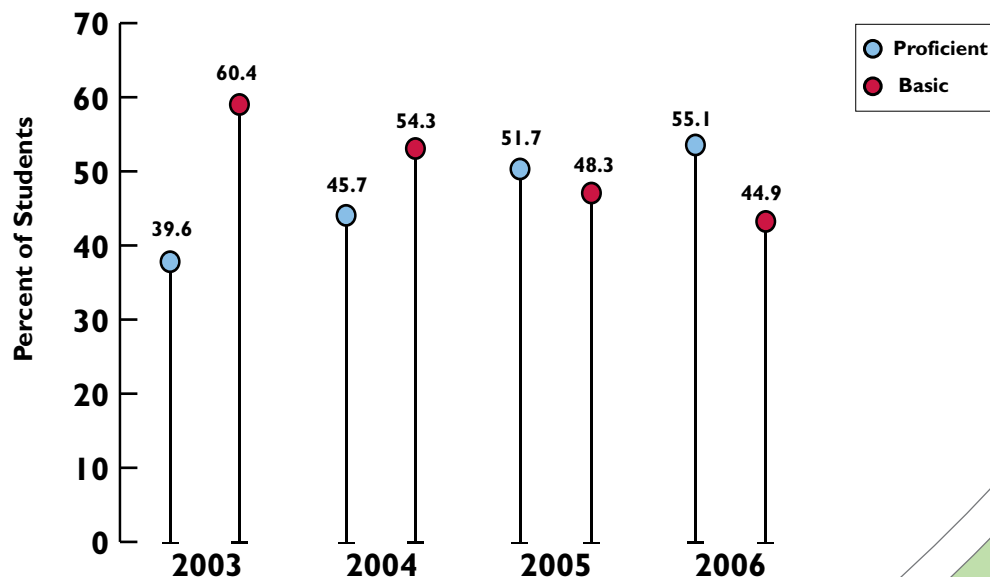


### MSA Proficiency Levels: Grade 3 — Reading



## Across-the-Board Improvement

### MSA Proficiency Levels: Grade 8 — Mathematics





# Making High School Mean Something

**T**he Maryland State Board of Education in 2003 made a bold and important move: students in the class of 2009 would need to pass four end-of-course assessments in order to receive a Maryland high school diploma. The State Board didn't come to that conclusion overnight. The state began studying graduation tests in 1993, based on a reform initiative put forth in 1989 by the Sondheim Commission on School Performance. The assessments cover academic material mandated statewide through the Maryland Content Standards, which have been in place since 1996.

Instituting the High School Assessments (HSAs) in algebra, English 2, government, and biology, Maryland joined 25 states that have or will soon have exit exam programs, with more states joining the movement each year.

Moreover, the State Board was acting on the recommendations of many business and education organizations, such as the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education and the University System of Maryland.

HSAs have been given to Maryland students for several years, although passing the exams will not be a graduation requirement until the class of 2009 reaches its senior year. As the exams became a requirement, students began to pass the assessments at unprecedented rates. When students, teachers, administrators, and parents understood the challenge presented by the assessments, they took them seriously. The result: student scores have skyrocketed. Freshmen taking the exam in 2006—for whom the tests will count—posted big score increases. For example, 71.5 percent of the 9th grade class passed the algebra exam on their first attempt last spring.

Students have as many as three times per year to pass each High School Assessment. Should a student miss passing an assessment on the first attempt, a variety of on-line tools and school-based assistance is becoming available to help preparation for subsequent attempts.

Right now, Maryland students are poised to pass the tests by graduation in 2009, but a state regulation on the books since 2003 will require a final check by the State Board on the graduation requirement in 2008.



# Maryland Residents Overwhelmingly Support High School Assessments

**M**aryland's efforts to strengthen high school graduation are being applauded throughout the state.

Nearly nine in 10 Maryland residents (87.2 percent) support the idea that high school students take and pass a series of assessments in key academic subjects to be eligible to receive a high school diploma, according to the results of a new survey. Slightly more (87.3 percent) agree that high school students need a higher level of skills for college or the job market than they did a decade ago.

More than 19 of 20 Maryland residents (96.9 percent) agree that high school students should be required to reach a minimum level of skill in English, math, and other subjects before they can graduate.

MSDE contracted with the Schaefer Center for Public Policy at the University of Baltimore to include three HSA questions in the center's 2007 policy survey of Maryland residents in an effort to determine the level of support for the testing program.

Not only does the average Maryland resident back high school assessments, but the survey found that the support cuts across racial and socio-economic lines.



**"Too many high school students who graduate are unprepared for the realities of the 21st century economy."**

— **Bill Gates**, chairman of the Microsoft Corporation, and co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, at the 2005 National Education Summit in Washington, D.C.

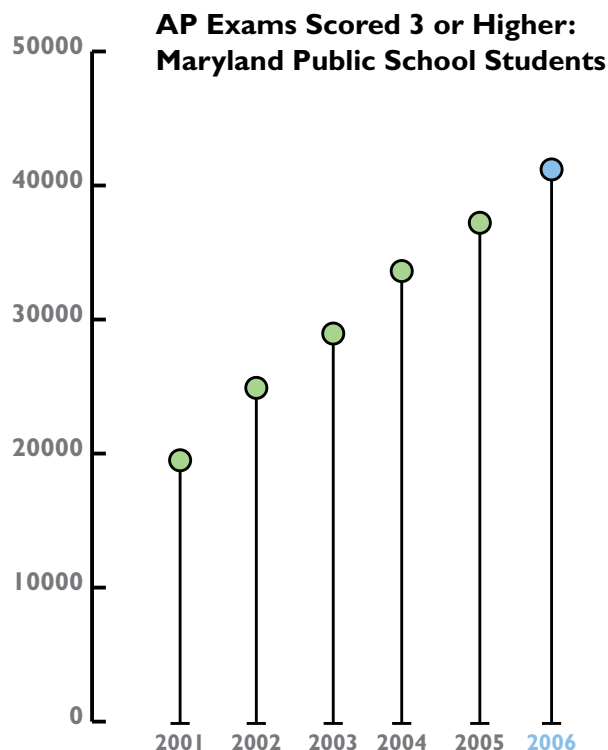


# Reaching for the Top

Scores of Maryland students already are achieving at the highest levels in the nation. MSDE has been working with local school systems to increase the number of Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate programs offered in the state's high schools, as well as student participation in the rigorous coursework. Maryland education officials also have been encouraging local systems to offer other college preparatory and admissions tests to more students, such as the PSAT, SAT, and ACT. Those efforts are paying off.



Maryland has been a national leader in Advanced Placement for many years, and 2006 was no exception. A total of 41,711 students took at least one AP exam, an 11.7 percent increase from the previous year. Students from historically underrepresented minority groups did particularly well. The number of African American students taking the test increased 16.2 percent, for example, to 4,800, and the number achieving college mastery scores of 3, 4, or 5 increased 17.5 percent to 2,570. In 2005, Maryland was second only to New York in the percentage of students scoring at college mastery levels on the AP exams.



Students in Maryland who take these national exams also are doing exceptionally well. For example, the critical reading scores of juniors who took the PSAT in 2006 were up 1.2 points over 2005, while mathematics scores jumped by nearly a point. Scores also were up on the ACT exam, whose popularity is growing in Maryland. The average score for Maryland students was 21.4, a large increase over last year's 21.0, and above the national composite of 21.1.

Strengthening student performance on national assessments is just one way Maryland schools are rising to the challenges of a changing economy. MSDE also is working to develop new Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) academies. In addition, MSDE has embraced Project Lead the Way, a career-oriented curriculum path in engineering and biomedical sciences, being implemented at a number of Maryland schools.

Researchers have found “strong evidence of benefits to students who participate in both AP courses and exams in terms of higher GPAs, credit hours earned and four-year graduation rates.”

— “Studies Find Benefits to Advanced Placement Courses,” *Washington Post*, January 29, 2007





## Getting a **Great** Start

The path to a great education begins long before a student enters the first grade. Maryland understands that a high-quality system of early childhood education depends on tight coordination of early learning programs, services, and resources. Based on these principles, Maryland transferred all of its early care and education programs to the Maryland State Department of Education.

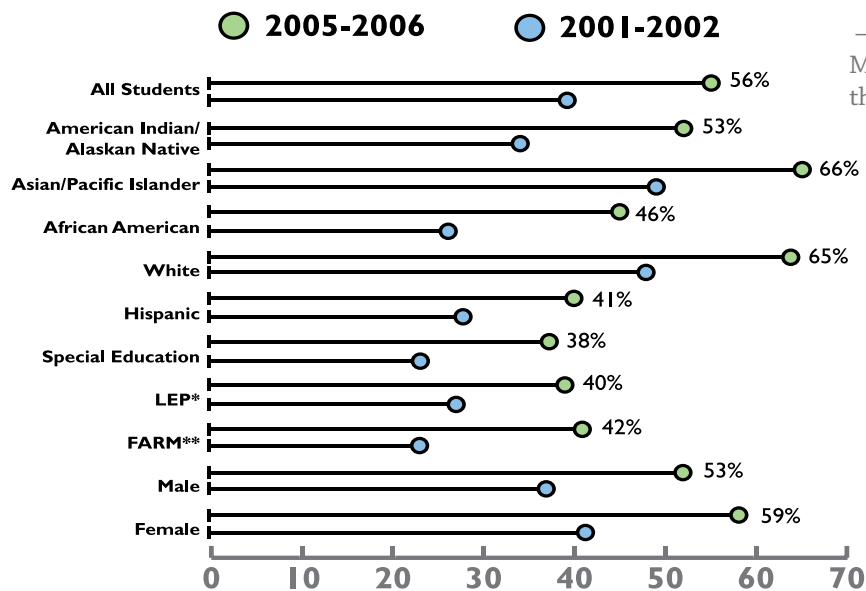
MSDE since July 2005 has overseen childcare in addition to public school prekindergarten and kindergarten programs, preschool special education, and Maryland's Infants and Toddler's Program. The Department accredits child care programs and credentials providers, operates the Head Start Collaboration Office, and administers contracts for child care resource and referral and family support programs. And much, much more. The coordination of these programs and services has a singular goal: to improve school readiness skills among all children.

The work of MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Development is paying off. At the start of every school year, teachers assess the knowledge and skills of each of Maryland's incoming kindergarteners. The young students are assessed in key areas such as language and literacy, scientific thinking, mathematical thinking, and social studies. The numbers are going up. Over the past five years, children entering kindergarten each year have been better prepared than those who entered the year before. In 2005-2006, 60 percent of all entering kindergarteners were fully prepared for school, a 2 percentage-point increase over 2004-2005 and an 11 percentage-point increase over 2001-2002.

**“Consolidating early care and education with K-to-12 education is a move supported by research, logic, and economics, creating a continuum of development from birth through high school. It remains to be seen whether other states will muster [Maryland's] political will.”**

— **Sandra J. Skolnik**, Executive Director, Maryland Committee for Children, in the *Baltimore Sun*, August 4, 2006

### Percentage of Kindergarten Students Assessed as “Fully Ready” in Mathematical Thinking



\* LEP = Limited English Proficient. \*\*FARM = Free and Reduced-price Meals

# The **Imperative** of Strong Adult **Education**

**E**d Hale, chairman and CEO of First Mariner Bancorp and chair of the Maryland Superintendent's Panel on Excellence in Adult Education, says that training adult learners is critical to the future of the state. "Our goal is to keep Maryland positioned to compete in the global economy," Hale noted. "Without adult education, we're losing ground."

The Superintendent's Panel on Excellence in Adult Education in late 2005 produced "Stepping Up to the Future: Adult Literacy Challenges at Work, at Home, and in the Maryland Community." The report calls for a new funding formula for adult education. Currently, Maryland funds adult education programs at a rate far below the national average even as the need for services increases. Among Eastern Seaboard states, Maryland ranks near the bottom in adult education funding.



## Maintaining a Competitive Maryland

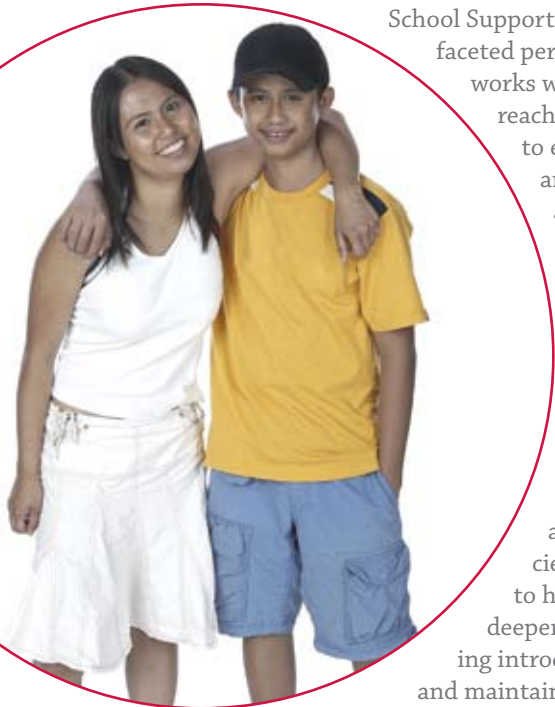
One in five adults in Maryland—approximately 20 percent of the population—does not have a high school diploma or have English language skills. The Superintendent's Panel was established to study and make recommendations regarding Maryland's adult education programs. The panel was launched after the General Assembly requested that MSDE submit a proposal to strengthen adult learning and reduce the state's 5,000-person waiting list for services.

**"If companies ... are to have the ability to remain competitive and successful, we must have an access to employees who have the education to move us forward."**

— **Jim Knudson**,  
Director of Human Resources, Phillips Foods

# Keeping Children Healthy and Safe

**E**motional, mental, social, and physical well-being is vital to developing bright minds. MSDE's Division of Student, Family, and School Support uses this multi-faceted perspective as it works with a wide-reaching community to ensure student and school health and well-being. By involving students, parents, school nurses, educators, school staff, health professionals, community organizations, and other agencies, MSDE is able to have a broader, deeper role in helping introduce, develop, and maintain healthy habits in the education community.



In 2005, school-based health centers (SBHCs) were mandated in Maryland schools. This is the first year MSDE has funded the 64 SBHCs in 11 counties, with plans to add another 10 SBHCs in the near future. These centers serve as clinics either within elementary, middle, high, K-8, and special school buildings or on the school campus, providing comprehensive preventative and primary health services.

The purpose of the SBHC is to help students and families who may be uninsured/underinsured, lack access to care, have chronic health conditions like asthma or allergies, or have other medical needs.

That is just one example of MSDE's broad approach to helping school systems provide a safe, healthy environment for learning. Among MSDE's other initiatives:

- Raising awareness of and preventing bullying and harassment through data collection and professional development.
- Assessing youth risk behavior through participation in the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance survey in cooperation with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as through the Maryland Adolescent Survey.
- Strengthening health and wellness through school nutrition programs, "Take 15 for the Health of It," the "Gear-Up" school fitness campaign, and other programs.
- Promoting and providing professional development on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, an effective campaign to reduce school behavior problems.

"I urge all adults across the country to take their responsibility to children—their own children and their community's children—seriously. With time and attention, adults will keep children safe in our nation's schools, and build a more peaceful society for our country."

— **First Lady Laura Bush**, White House Conference on School Safety, held at the National 4-H Center, Chevy Chase, Maryland, October 10, 2006

# Producing Stronger Teachers, Stronger Administrators

**K**imberly Oliver, a kindergarten teacher at Broad Acres Elementary School in Montgomery County, last May was named the 2006-2007 National Teacher of the Year. She was honored by President Bush in a White House ceremony.

The milestone for Ms. Oliver was also one for Maryland. She became the first Maryland Teacher of the Year in the history of the state's participation in the program to attain this title.

"It is an honor to serve as the Maryland Teacher of the Year, and now as the National Teacher of the Year, representing the teaching profession," said Ms. Oliver. "I am already an advocate for children and teachers. Given this unbelievable opportunity, I hope to emphasize the importance of early childhood education."

High expectations and a powerful series of assessments are important, but without strong teachers and outstanding school leadership, Maryland schools will be unable to take the next step forward. The situation is complicated by a chronic teacher shortage in the state and the fact that a large percentage of principals in Maryland are at or near retirement age.

Maryland needs more than 6,000 new teachers each year, plus scores of new principals.



**Kimberly Oliver**  
*National Teacher of the Year*  
2006-2007

MSDE has responded through a variety of efforts to maintain and strengthen the abilities of school administrators and classroom teachers. For example, MSDE's Principals' Academy has been training school leaders since 2001. New principals are paired with experienced school leaders in a program that includes both a summer learning program and mentoring. Nearly 730 principals have gone through the program over the past six years, and all 24 school systems have benefited.

The Principals' Academy is just one of MSDE's innovative tools designed to improve school leadership and strengthen teaching. Among the others:

- MSDE has encouraged the development of nontraditional teacher certification programs. For example, MSDE has been involved with the federal Troops to Teachers program, designed to smooth the transition to teaching for qualified people leaving the military. MSDE has increased its support of the program over time, hiring a full-time coordinator and receiving a federal grant to help fund the program.
- The state is among the nation's leaders in the number of teachers who have gone through the rigorous National Board certification process. Last year a record 161 Maryland teachers earned certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. That brings the number of National Board Certified Teachers in the state to 822, ranking Maryland 15th in the nation.
- MSDE in 2006 granted program approval status to the New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS) principal preparation program, in partnership with Baltimore City. The approval grants full principal certification for those who successfully complete the NLNS training program in 2006-2007 and 2007-2008. The New Leaders training program allows participants to gain certification in one year. Maryland is the first state in the nation to be involved in the effort.

**"Maryland is a special place.  
It is a place where great things  
can happen and are happening."**

— **Jon Schnur**, founder and CEO,  
New Leaders for New Schools,  
November 13, 2006

# Getting and Keeping Parents Involved

The Maryland State Department of Education has taken major strides this year in implementing recommendations from “A Shared Responsibility,” the Maryland Parent Advisory Council’s (M-PAC) report on parent involvement in schools. As an initial phase of a long-term strategy, MSDE has relied on the five categories of parent engagement recommended by M-PAC—leadership, accountability, training, partnership, and communication—to begin to develop clear channels of communication between community partners and the Department.

A first priority for MSDE was to form the Superintendent’s Family Involvement Council, which will advise the State Superintendent and Department of Education on family involvement issues. The Council members have a wide range of experience, skills, and expertise, and include parents, students, education staff, and local and statewide community organizations. The purpose of this group is to allow a unique exchange of ideas and methods for strengthening parent involvement in schools.

Another MSDE priority was to create infrastructure within the Department that would help support family involvement statewide. After examining the



## Great Things Are Happening

Department’s infrastructure as it relates to family involvement issues, MSDE renamed the Division of Student and School Services the Division of Student, Family, and School Support and added staff specifically devoted to family involvement issues and programs. MSDE also established a high-level internal team to develop an action plan for other M-PAC recommendations. Already, initiatives have been set in motion, in particular training teachers in how to engage parents and families in the school community.

Looking toward the future, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members must communicate with each other and work together to create a learning environment that will ensure the success of every student in Maryland.

**“To improve schools, Maryland  
aims to raise parent power.”**

—“Parents to Have Bigger Say in  
Education,” *Washington Post*,  
January 5, 2006



## A History of **Innovative** Leadership

The Maryland public schools remain among the nation's most honored systems, thanks in large part to the strong, independent policies of the State Board and the innovative direction provided by State Superintendent Nancy S. Grasmick.



Dr. Grasmick last year was selected to receive the 2006 James Bryant Conant Award from the Education Commission of the States (ECS) for her contributions to American education. Past winners include Children's

Defense Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman, Sen. Claiborne Pell, former Education Secretary (and current Senator) Lamar Alexander, and Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, 2004-2006 ECS chairman, presented the award to Dr. Grasmick last spring.

The honor was just one many received by MSDE, its staff, and Maryland schools over the past year. For example:

- Six Maryland schools were named National Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education last fall, the most the state could have. The schools are Severna Park Middle School in Anne Arundel County, Ridgely Middle School in Baltimore County, Bainbridge Elementary School in Cecil County, Clarksville Middle School in Howard County, Thomas Pyle Middle School in Montgomery County, and Glenarden Woods Elementary School in Prince George's County.

- MSDE's partnership to develop a curriculum with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture was named one of 25 Innovators of the Year by the *Daily Record*, a Baltimore business publication. The curriculum features educational lessons and activities that portray African American history as a vital and integral part the state's past. The State Department of Education has received an Innovator of the Year award for five straight years.
- State Superintendent Grasmick was named "Administrator of the Month" for December 2006 by *District Administration* magazine, a national monthly for K-12 administrators.
- Federally funded tutoring programs in Maryland, offered to low-income students in struggling schools, have a 68 percent participation rate—the highest in the nation. The MSDE-administered program provides Supplemental Educational Services to students in Baltimore City, and Baltimore, Frederick, Harford, Kent, and Prince George's counties. The national average is 19 percent.

"The dream of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum was long in the making. It has been truly gratifying for the board of directors and staff to watch as the museum and the educational partnership with the Maryland State Department of Education came to life. Being recognized as an 'Innovator of the Year' not only validates the critical nature of our partnership but more importantly, it honors the African American men and women who helped shape our state and nation."

— **George L. Russell, Jr.**, chairman of the board, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture

## Resources for Improving Schools

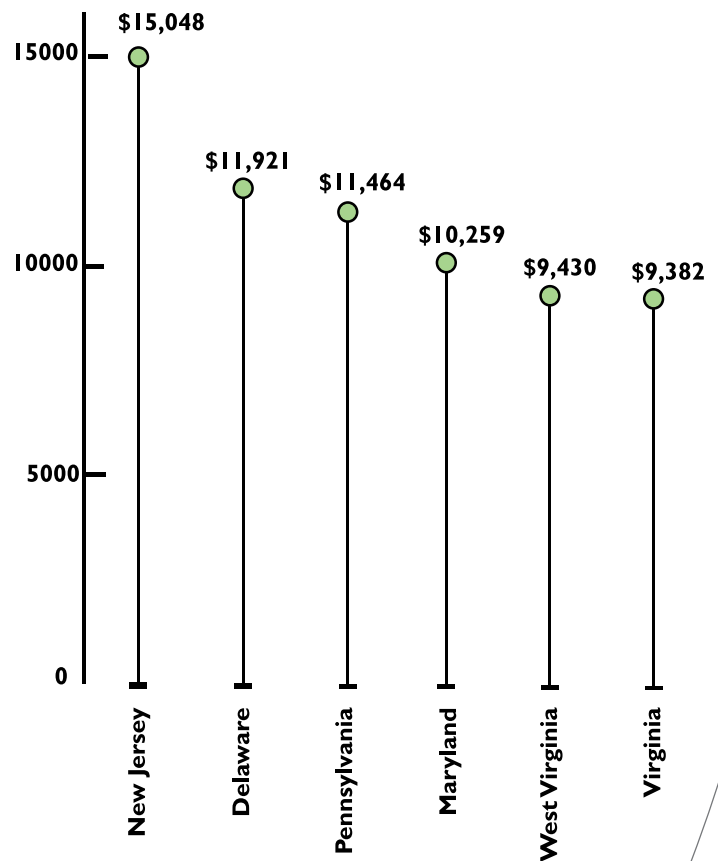
**M**aryland's bold and successful Bridge to Excellence in Maryland Public Schools Act, approved in 2002, has dramatically boosted funding to all of the state's 24 school systems. Designed to bring both adequacy and equity to school funding, it incorporates many of the recommendations of the Thornton Commission. The State Board of Education and MSDE joined state lawmakers in support of Bridge to Excellence, believing that the law was good for the schools and important for the state. Independent research firm MGT completed an interim report on Bridge to Excellence in early 2007, revealing that the law has accomplished much of what it set out to do: help strengthen student achievement.

Investment in Maryland public schools pays big dividends in the state's economic future. Once Bridge to Excellence is fully implemented in 2008, Maryland schools will have received an additional \$1.3 billion in state support, with a large share of the extra funding targeted at economically disadvantaged schools and school systems.

The Bridge to Excellence Act is far more than a funding program. It requires the state's 24 school systems to develop detailed, five-year Master Plans that reveal how they will use the funds to strengthen instruction, close the achievement gap between student subgroups, and reach other educational goals. MSDE staff work closely with local school systems as they update their plans, reviewing goals and assessing their success. The result provides the State Board with important oversight and input in these areas.

A task force of the Maryland State Department of Education in 2004 found \$3.85 billion in school facility needs. The General Assembly has stepped forward, providing a record \$377.7 million in school construction funds in fiscal 2007.

**Education Spending Per Student  
(School Year 2004-2005) Mid-Atlantic Region**



Source: U.S. Department of Education,  
National Center for Education Statistics,  
November 2006

## Providing Aid to Strengthen the Classroom

“Districts are rightly using Thornton money for broad interventions that can lift all students and for targeted strategies aimed at low-performing students.”

— Editorial, *Baltimore Sun*, February 20, 2007

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